

Great Ape Conservation Fund



Apes, by their nature, are extremely vulnerable. They occur at very low densities, grow relatively slowly, are long-lived, have low reproductive rates and complex social relationships. Today, all the world's great ape species are threatened with extinction.

In Asia, both orangutans and gibbons are facing a multitude of serious threats. Asia's only great ape species, the Sumatran orangutan and the Bornean orangutan, are found respectively on the islands of Sumatra and Borneo. They will both be pushed to extinction if illegal logging, forest fires, poorly planned road construction, conversion of indigenous forest to plantations, draining of peat lands, and poaching continue unchecked. Stopping habitat loss and protecting remaining forests are essential to save these unique species

Asia's lesser apes, the gibbons, are threatened by habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation, and hunting for food, medicine, and sport. This situation is made worse by the lack of effective sanctuaries for gibbons. Existing protected areas suffer from inadequate management, and poor enforcement of wildlife laws.

Africa's apes - gorillas, chimpanzees and bonobos - are also facing an arsenal of threats including hunting, habitat loss, an illegal pet trade, and disease outbreaks. These threats have combined to rapidly decimate populations. In 1960, more than one million chimpanzees populated the dense forests of Africa. Today, fewer than 200,000 survive in the wild and their numbers continue to fall.

Throughout West and Central Africa, gorillas, chimpanzees and bonobos are being hunted for food. The situation

has been heightened as roads built for logging and mining operations have allowed poachers access to previously remote forests, which once served as a protected refuge for apes. In villages where meat from domesticated animals is scarce and expensive, wild animals are hunted as a cheap and locally available source of protein. In cities, eating bushmeat has become a status symbol for the wealthy and the demand for wild meat

has steadily increased. Additionally, recent outbreaks of hemorrhagic fevers, like Ebola, have reduced some ape populations to a fraction of their previous numbers, killing up to 90% of individuals in affected populations.

Apes are susceptible to many of the same diseases as humans. As growing human populations penetrate further into ape habitat, the potential for disease transmission between apes and people, and vice versa, is increasing. As a result, the bushmeat trade poses a serious health risk for humans.

In response to these many pressing threats, the United States Congress passed the Great Ape Conservation Act in 2000 which created the Great Ape Conservation Fund for conservation of gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos, orangutans and gibbons. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service awards grants from the fund for activities and research related to infectious diseases, strengthening law enforcement, conservation education, safeguarding habitat and much more. With the help of this Act and many committed conservationists, there is hope that these animals will beat the odds of extinction.



Top: Female Orangutan (*Pongo pygmaeus*) © Dammer Saragih/OUREI
Bottom: Adult Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*) © I.Nichols/NGS

In 2010 Congressional appropriation of \$2.5 million to the Great Apes Fund, was augmented by \$2.5 million from USAID's Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE). These additional funds complement and support ape conservation in Central African countries. The Service has leveraged \$4.9 million in matching and in-kind funds to support 59 projects in Asia and Africa including the following vital efforts:

- Develop a long-term collaborative approach to conservation of the world's most endangered ape species, the Cross River Gorilla, through a coordinated campaign to raise capacity in law enforcement, community awareness, conservation science and the establishment of new protected areas.
- Support the development of unique law enforcement partnerships between wildlife authorities and civil society groups in four Central African countries to investigate and prosecute wildlife crimes, conduct public outreach campaigns, reduce corruption and curtail the illegal wildlife trade.
- Develop sustainable livelihoods for ex-poachers in Thailand by establishing a model organic farming alternative livelihoods program for communities with a history of poaching living near Thailand's Dong Phrayayen-Khao Yai Forest Complex. This will benefit gibbons, tigers and elephants in the vicinity of this forest complex.
- Prioritize sites for yellow-cheeked gibbon conservation in Vietnam's Southern Annamites by increasing ranger capacity to undertake surveys, supporting gibbon and local community surveys, facilitating the identification of priority sites, establishing a gibbon monitoring system, supporting wildlife law enforcement, and incorporating results into provincial conservation planning in the greater Lam Dong Province area.
- Conserve the orangutans of Indonesia's Gunung Palung National Park by assisting communities on the fringe of the park in building legal protections for their community forests, supporting local communities in developing sustainable management of their natural resources, and continuing the on-going environmental education program with an increased emphasis on the communities key to orangutan conservation.



Silverback Gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla*)

© Angeliqne Todd/WWF

- Strengthen protection of the pileated gibbon in Cambodia's northern plains by training patrol staff in law enforcement techniques including advanced methods of patrol data management, improving communications at sub-stations, supplying basic equipment, monitoring gibbons and ensuring effective protection by patrols.
- Conserve Bornean orangutans through community engagement in Batang Ai National Park and Lanjak-Entimau Wildlife Sanctuary, Sarawak, Malaysia by presenting an orangutan conservation radio program in the Iban language, broadcasting it on a regular basis through Radio Television Malaysia (RTM).



Adult female Gibbon in China
(*Nomascus gabriellae*) © Zhao Chao

Great Ape Conservation Funding from 2006 through 2010	
Total Number of Grant Proposals Received	508
Total Number of Grants Awarded	293
Percentage of Countries with Great Apes Receiving Grants	100%
Total Amount Appropriated by U.S. Congress	\$9,227,606
Total Funds Distributed through Grants	\$21,163,000
Total Funds to Administration of Grants	\$477,259
Total Matching/In-kind Funds Leveraged by Grants	\$25,775,000

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February 2011

